THE LAUD RAGAMALA MINIATURES

27 APR 1958
MADRAS

THE LAUD RAGAMALA MINIATURES

A Study in Indian Painting and Music

by

HERBERT J. STOOKE

M.A. OXON

and

KARL KHANDALAVALA

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PREFACE

The sequence of pictures, which is here reproduced in its entirety for the first time, comprises some of the earliest Indian paintings ever to have reached this country.

As such they have a special interest as important landmarks in our cultural connections. Their significance, however, goes considerably further, for in style they reveal a tradition of painting, which, if strongly influenced by the Mughals, is none the less un-Mughal in character. They thus provide important evidence of the state of Indian painting, in the early seventeenth century, in centres other than the Mughal capital. Finally their subject matter introduces us, at an early period, to a form of expression which in its close association of poetry, music and painting is one of the most significant contributions India has made to art.

To explain these special characteristics is the primary concern of Mr. Stooke to whom the credit must go for conceiving and planning this book. His work has been brilliantly supplemented by Mr. Khandalavala who brings the latest Indian research to bear on the problem of the pictures' dating and provenance.

W. G. ARCHER

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Thanks are also due to the Curators of the Bodleian Library for permitting the reproduction and for granting all facilities to the publishers and to A. F. L. Beeston, Keeper of Oriental Books, for his helpful co-operation.

Finally above all I wish to thank my dear mother for her never failing encouragement in this and all my literary undertakings.

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THE LAUD RAGAMALA PAINTINGS

as Illustrations of Indian Music and Poetry

by

HERBERT J. STOOKE

Towards the beginning of the seventeenth century, there grew up in India a type of painting for which no exact parallels exist in the West. This art served to illustrate a particular form of poetry—a form which aimed less at poetic description than at rendering the mood and sentiment behind the traditional forms of Indian music. Poetry, painting and music were thus brought into a new relationship. Through the verbal imagery of a poem, the musical form was given a more precise expression, while in its turn, the picture made even clearer the interpretation attempted by the poem. Such paintings were known as *Ragamalas* or Garlands of Music and the earliest of them to reach this country is the set of eighteen pictures presented to the Bodleian Library by Archbishop Laud in 1640 and here published as a series for the first time.

The circumstances which led up to this gift are full of intriguing possibilities. Laud who was born in 1573, became, twenty years later, a Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, finally graduating in 1594. He seems to have had a lifelong interest in Oriental culture for, besides increasing the endowments of the University Chair in Hebrew, he took the important step of founding an entirely new post—that of Professor of Arabic. In 1630 he became Chancellor of the University and from 1635 until 1641, when he was finally imprisoned for alleged offences against religion,

the Bodleian Library received from him a series of munificent gifts. Among the 1300 manuscripts which reached it in this way is an album (MS. *Laud. Or.* 149) containing specimens of Persian calligraphy, a number of Mughal pictures and the actual *Ragamala* set with which we are concerned. On the flyleaf of the Album is a note recording the year 1640, and Laud's name as donor. The presence of these Indian pictures in such an assembly of manuscripts has naturally caused some speculation as to the original source from which Laud might have obtained them. It was at first supposed that Sir Thomas Roe who was envoy at the Court of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir in 1615 might have brought them with him on his return to England. Such a theory, however, would assume that all the pictures were at least as early as that date whereas there seems reason to believe that the actual date of some of them is at least five to ten years later. Another theory advanced by Mr. Percy Brown is that the pictures were formerly the property of 'Edward Pococke, an eminent Oriental scholar of the seventeenth century, who lived for some years at Aleppo'. There is no convincing evidence in support of this theory either, while the records of the Bodleian Library itself have so far yielded no clues of any kind. None the less it is only by means of some British, or, at any rate, some European traveller to India that the pictures can have reached the West and when their general style is considered, their acquisition by a stranger is not entirely surprising.

When compared with the pictures known to have been executed for the Mughal Emperors Akbar and Jahangir, their most obvious characteristic is their brusque and vigorous simplicity.

The predominant colours appear to be pale yellow for general background and pale blue for the sky. Houses, apartments or shrines all have white walls, pink supporting pillars, dark red doors and canopies, with variegated roofs which sometimes have pale green tops. Floors

and verandahs are nearly always dark red. The chief shades for coats, skirts and bodices are orange, red, mauve and yellow. Sashes are of geometrical design in red and white or white, black and gold. The complexions of the men and women are either pink or mauve. Trees are stylised with dark green foundations on which are placed dark green leaves. The cypress trees are an exquisite pale green. Rivers and rivulets are slate grey. Special notice must be taken of the peculiar type of bodice worn by the ladies which leaves the body from below the breasts to just below the navel uncovered. The sashes are mostly long and wide, two peculiarities of the gentlemen's coats or jamas being the five to eight points at the bottom and the hangings from the shoulders. In their turn, the ladies all have gold wrist bands or bracelets and gold bands below the short arm of the bodices. They also have large gold rings on their fingers and thumbs and black pompons on the end of long tassels hanging from their waists. Their saris are all of transparent white or silver.

This standardisation in colour and costume is paralleled in the drawing, for this also is bold and sharply simplified. It seems not unreasonable to assume, therefore, that the set was painted for a somewhat different class of patron from that of the Mughal emperor or the grand nobility and for this very reason, was readily acquired by some European visitor to India.

If these characteristics help to explain the pictures' arrival in Oxford, it is their actual content, however, which fascinates us today. Each of the eighteen pictures is surmounted by a title in Persian which gives us the following list of names:

Malhar	*Asavari*	*Pancham*
Maligora	*Dhanasri*	*Varari*
Gunakali	*Nata*	*Bhairavi*
Bhivasa	*Hindola*	*Devakali*
Kanhara	*Malkaus*	*Bilawal*
Bhairon	*Syama Gujari*	*Vasanta*

All these refer to Indian musical forms and since *Ragamala* illustrations are an attempt to express the meaning of music through the medium of pictorial art it is necessary to bear in mind some fundamental Indian conceptions.

According to Hindu tradition, music originated with the Gods and Goddesses who were supposed to be its authors and patrons. Prior to the creation of the universe an all-pervading sound rang through space. The three deities, *Brahma*, the Creator, *Vishnu*, the Preserver, and *Mahadeva*, the Destroyer, who comprise the Hindu triad, were all music lovers and the first musicians. Music descended from Brahma, was brought into being by *Mahadeva* and is now performed by *Naiks* or *Masters of Music* with divine approval. This belief is evidenced by the fact that in India all religious ceremonies, devotional prayers and social performances are invariably accompanied by the chanting of musical verses. It also finds support in legends such as that of the creation of the Indian musical instrument, the *Vina*, by the Goddess of Learning, *Sarasvati*, the wife of Brahma, and by the beautiful legend of the creation of the greatest of all vinas, the rudra vina, by *Mahadeva*. *Mahadeva, the god and inventor of music, once saw Parvati his wife reposing most gracefully, her breathing like soft music, her exquisite bosom rising and falling in rhythm, her arms and wrists laden with bangles causing music by their motion. Mahadeva watched her for a long time in silence, intoxicated by the ravishing vision, which so impressed him that he found no peace until he discovered a way of making a permanent record of the beauty he observed. The result was the Rudra Vina. In this instrument, the long neck represents the straight lithe figure of Parvati, the two supporting gourds her breasts, the metal frets her bracelets, and most expressive of all, the sound, her rhythmic breathing.*

From these 'divine' beginnings, Indian music was gradually systematised and there grew up a basic conception, the *Raga*, which was to prove the key to all subsequent

developments. This basic form is, in essence, a 'melody type or mould', having a special relationship to the *that* or 'mode'. The latter is based on the relative intervals between several sounds which constitute an octave and it is out of these that a Raga is formed. It employs all or some of the intervals of the *that* but with a peculiar melodic style of its own. In other words, it is a melodic extension of certain notes of a particular scale or 'mode', according to certain rules of style and time. Besides the seven main notes in the Hindu scale, *srutis* or 'shaded' notes were also employed. These are comparable to Western quartertones and are twenty-two in number. If these 'shaded' notes are taken into account, a Raga can then be described as a succession of notes from a scale of twenty-two, combined in certain characteristic progressions but with certain notes more emphasised than others. It is important, however, to remember that a Raga is not a song or tune, for the number of songs which may be composed in a given Raga is unlimited. It is rather a combination of notes which form a bare skeleton out of which a song is made. The notes can be played in any degree or movement of time without destroying the inherent character of the Raga, though the mode or *that* must remain the same throughout. Without stretching the analogy unduly, we might compare a Raga to a figured bass, leaving every possibility open for variations but having the outline of the expression defined in advance. Another analogy is that of jazz where we see one small phrase or melody improvised and orchestrated upon at will by performers, although still retaining the essence of the original phrase, which was intended to convey a certain feeling or emotion. Since each Raga tends to pivot on a particular note—a note which by the frequency of its application and the length of its duration shows to best advantage the character and peculiarity of the Raga—the leading note was used as the basis for classification and led

in the Northern or Hindustani system, to the recognition of six main 'melody-moulds'. Similarly, since it was common to have variations in which certain notes were omitted and the progressions and stresses differed, the term '*Ragini*' or subordinate Raga was devised—each Raga then having five Raginis associated with it. Occasionally even further variations were recognised—a Raga or Ragini being then credited with putras or sons.[1]

Such a classification of Ragas is essentially technical. But the emotional side to music was by no means ignored and its importance for poetry and painting can be seen in the following developments. Having divided 'melody-moulds' into six main types and then associated thirty variants with them, the Northern system went on to attribute a presiding spirit or personality to each of these thirty-six forms. Each Raga and Ragini was supposed to have its own *Rupa* or psychic form, in two manifestations, (*a*) the Invisible, called the Sound form or the *Nadamaya rupa*, and (*b*) the Visible, called the Image form or *Devatamaya rupa*. It was thought that the presiding spirit or ethos of a Raga must be induced to descend in its physical sound form if the rendering or interpretation of the melody was to be successfully achieved. It could not become alive by a purely mechanical reproduction of its musical structure.

From this position, it was natural to go a stage further and attribute to the various forms one or other of the sexes. Ragas were therefore viewed as male while Raginis were treated as their wives or consorts. Such a division is not nearly as fanciful as it might at first appear for, as Pandit Krishna Chandra Ghose has pointed out, the musical phrases in Ragas have a generally ascending tendency, with the cadential notes resting on the stronger pulses, thus

[1] In Southern India an entirely different system of classification was employed—72 variations being recognised, each being termed a Raga. This system did not lead, however, to any pictorial representations.

suggesting a masculine trait while in Raginis the phrases tend downwards with cadential notes resting on the weaker pulses, thus reflecting the feminine. Indeed how fundamental to Indian conceptions is this idea that Ragas and Raginis have personalities of their own can be seen from the legend about an early musician.

Once the great sage Narada felt proud that he had mastered the art and science of music. Lord Vishnu to curb his pride took Narada to the abode of the Gods. They entered a spacious building in which many men and beautiful women were weeping over their broken limbs. Vishnu asked them the cause of their misery. They answered that they were the Ragas and Raginis created by Mahesvara but that a rishi named Narada, ignorant of the true science and art of music and thoroughly unskilled in its performance, had sung so recklessly that their features were distorted and their limbs broken. They also said that unless Mahadeva, the master of the art, or some other truly skilled person sang them properly there was no hope of their ever being restored to their proper forms. Narada, abashed at his actions, knelt before Vishnu and begged forgiveness.

The same conceptions underlie another early myth according to which Ragas were created by Mahadeva and the Raginis by Brahma. Mahadeva is a five-headed god whose heads turn respectively to the four quarters of the globe and to heaven. It is said that from each of his five heads came forth one of the five principal Ragas, the sixth coming from Parvati, his wife. Brahma, the first of the Hindu triad, added five Raginis to each Raga in sympathetic strain.

But besides symbolising the emotional qualities of music by personifying each Raga and Ragini as a male or female character, Northern Indian theory also took note of the powerful associations of music with particular sentiments and moods, particular regions, particular seasons of the year and even the hours of the day. *Dipaka Raga*—the Lamp Raga—for example, was so intimately associated with fire

and scorching heat that following certain legendary incidents, its performance has been largely discontinued.

It is said that a sacred light which was kept burning perpetually in a sanctuary was once allowed to go out through the negligence of the priest responsible for the replenishment of the oil. This caused wide consternation as it was thought to be the work of an evil spirit and would cause great calamity to befall the country. A famous musician, however, sung Dipaka Raga to such effect that one by one all the lamps were lighted by its power.

It is further narrated that in the reign of Akbar, one of the greatest singers, Naik Gopal, met a tragic end by being compelled to sing the same Raga. The emperor issued a command and although the singer begged to be excused, the monarch's wishes had to be obeyed. Gopal disappeared for six months and then returned to meet his fate. He placed himself neck deep in the sacred waters of the Jumna and began his song. The pure notes vibrated in the air. The water grew hot and presently began to boil. The slow torture of the singer was more than he could bear. He implored the emperor to intercede but Akbar was merciless. In his agony the singer burst forth with tremendous vigour and sang with such power that the element of fire in Nature was excited and each note turned into a flame, until his whole person exhaled fire and his body was slowly consumed.

Megha Raga is another form with precise associations. Its time for recital is the rainy season and so intimately is the music associated with clouds that its correct recital is said to cause a pouring forth of rain. *During Akbar's reign, Tan Sen, another celebrated musician of the court, is said to have sung Dipaka Raga with such intensity that the palace caught fire. A girl carrying a pitcher of water happened to pass by, heard the tune and saw the building burning. She stopped, set down her vessel, clasped her hands, besought the god to assist her, stood up and began to sing the Megha Raga. So correct was her singing that the heavens were disturbed and rain poured down in torrents, thus extinguishing the flames* (see Pl. I).

This legend influences the mind of the people to this day. It is said that since the burning of Akbar's palace nobody has dared ever to sing Dipaka Raga again.

There are many other emotional links. *Vasanta Raga*, for instance, expresses human reaction to the joy of life in spring, *Megha Raga* to the advent of the rains. *Asavari Raga* is melancholy pleading for just redress of a grievance, *Nata Raga* symbolises the heroic martial spirit of man. The late Chintaswamy Mudaliar, who made a life-long study of music, even enumerates individual notes as expressing different emotions, thereby following ancient tradition which he only slightly modifies: *Sa* for example is the sound of joy and happiness produced by the peacock at moments of rapture, *Ri* is the troubled low of a cow in calling to her calf when it is dragged away from her, *Pa* is the note of joy sounded by the nightingale at springtide, and so on.

★

It is conceptions such as these which explain the kind of names given to the Ragas and Raginis and the visual imagery employed in the pictures. In many cases, such as Bhairon or Pancham Ragas, the picture shows the Raga himself surrounded by attendants or listening to music. In other cases it is the prevailing mood which seems to determine the imagery and we see in Raginis such as Gunakali, Dhanasri or Nata, the spirit of the music expressed as a girl longing for her lover or a man engaged in martial exercises. In others, the Ragas and Raginis themselves are not portrayed but instead circumstances are depicted which are suggestive of their character. Kanhara Ragini, for example, shows a king holding aloft an elephant tusk, suggesting by this gesture the whole mood of the song.

It is in this way that Raga and Ragini pictures acquire their strangely absorbing content.

In the following commentary an attempt is made to explain their legends, motifs and stories in detail.

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PLATES AND COMMENTARIES

In describing the following eighteen Ragas and Raginis I have restricted the text to a general description of the motif, legend and story attached to each miniature.

Variations of names have been given because Sanskrit names and Hindi variations together with vulgarized forms have often lead to confusion of identity. Many Ragas have changed their forms so that pictures often no longer represent accurately the Raga after which they were named. The origins of pictorial motifs have sometimes been forgotten. In some cases it is quite impossible to give a literal translation of the name of a Raga, to trace its origin or attach it to any specific season, deity or occasion.

The Bodleian set of miniatures is not accompanied by any text. Where Sanskrit or Hindu texts are mentioned this refers either to the treatises on music and the sets of verses mentioned earlier in this book or to verses found on particular paintings. The texts are far too numerous to be included in this book; a list can be found in O. C. Gangoly's Ragas and Raginis.

All diacritical marks have purposely been omitted.

The average size of the originals is 6″ × $4\frac{1}{4}$″.

PLATE I

(fol. 3v)

[MALHAR, MEGHA or MEGHA–MALLAR RAGA

The literal meaning of Megha in Sanskrit is 'Cloud'. Megha Mallar Raga is 'Lord of the Clouds'. The Raga is supposed to produce rain. It is said to have come from the fifth head of Mahadeva or Siva, which is turned towards the Heavens.

Although originally personified as a four-armed deity with blue complexion the image soon became that of Krishna, the most celebrated hero of Indian mythology and the most popular of all deities, a direct manifestation of Vishnu.

The Bodleian painting is simple. Krishna ('The Dark') dances with one lady, accompanied by a lady musician with a drum. (Megha the melody of the summer solstice, is accompanied by drums to imitate thunder). Krishna has no vina and there is scarcely any background, while later examples have trees, clouds, flowers and cows.

One legend has it that a dancing girl, by singing this Raga, caused rain to fall and saved the crops in time of drought. Another legend runs, that a maiden, passing Akbar's burning palace, sang Megha Raga until the Heavens poured forth torrents which extinguished the fire *(see p. 15)**.*

The sonorous music of Megha Raga portrays the majesty of the clouds and expresses the joyful feeling caused by the advent of the rains. The Raga should be played in July and August.

Malhar Raga

PLATE II

(fol. 5v)

Maligora, Malavika, Malavi or Malava-Gaudi Ragini

The personification of this melody shows lovers meeting in the evening and embracing as they enter their apartments. A Sanskrit text suggests that the lover has brought his lady a present in the form of a garland, which is shown in later miniatures.

The Bodleian picture is again less elaborate in scenery than later examples and has in fact no suggestion of evening, as the sky is blue whereas in others it is dark.

Malavi is said to be the wife or Ragini of Pancham or Sri Raga. This is probably an example of a Ragini taking its title from a place i.e., Malwa and Gaur.

COLOURS:

Background: *Pale yellow and pale blue sky*
House white side, pink pillars, pale green roof
Floor dark red.

Male: *Complexion dark mauve*
Coat orange red with dark red hangings on back
Trousers mauve
Sash black, white and gold
Necklace white and Crown gold.

Female: *Complexion pink*
Bodice dark blue
Skirt pale pink with black bobs on girdle
Sash white with red gold crossing.

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MALIGORA RAGINI

PLATE III

(*fol.* 8*r*)

GUNAKALI, GUNAKRIYA or GUNAKARI RAGINI

Gunakali is the wife of Raga Malkaus, which emanated not from one of the heads of Mahadeva, but from Parvati, his wife; it is the Raga of passion, to be sung after midnight.

From texts we learn that Gunakali, in tears and old garments, is 'one whose lord is away'. She prepares a garland of flowers for her lover whom she expects to return and is anxious because he is overdue.

The sentiment expressed is great sorrow and longing. This early picture is less elaborate than later examples which show trees and attendants. We see the same maiden as in the illustration of Bhivas Ragini (Pl. IV), dressed in the same delicate pale green bodice and mauve skirt covered by a white or silver sari. She is probably preparing the garland from the white flower in the vase. Her complexion is dark mauve expressing sorrow at the absence of her lover, while in Bhivas it is pink, indicating joy at his presence.

COLOURS:

Background: *Pale yellow and pale blue sky*
House white with pink pillars and pale green roof with dark red band. Floor dark red.

Female: *Complexion mauve*
Bodice pale green
Skirt mauve
Sash white
Sari white or silver.

Vase: Pink.

Stool: *Mauve and pale pink.*

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Gunakali Ragini

PLATE IV

(*fol.* 91)

BHIVAS, BHIBHASA or VIBHASA RAGINI

Bhivas Ragini is an early morning melody illustrated by two lovers who have fallen asleep at daybreak. They are roused from slumber by the irritating crow of a cock. Dawn and cock are regarded as the enemies of lovers and so the picture shows the man attempting to shoot the cock with bow and arrow. (In the Laud miniature the cock is not visible.) Other examples of the Ragini show the lover shooting a flower arrow at the heroine in an endeavour to re-awaken her passion. The Laud miniature shows the bow and arrow, apparently of the floral type, on the ground. The lady is the same as depicted in Gunakali (see Pl. III and commentary).

One school attributes this Ragini to Megha Raga. The literal meaning of Bhivas is 'The light or shining Ragini', or 'The radiance Ragini', expressing the joyful feeling of two lovers.

COLOURS:

Background: *Pale yellow and blue sky*
House white, pink and red with green roof.

Male: *Complexion pink*
Jacket orange red
Trousers mauve
Sash white, red and gold. Turban mauve.

Female: *Complexion pink*
Bodice pale green
Skirt mauve
Sash white
Sari white or silver.

Bow and arrow of floral type, white.

BHIVAS RAGINI

PLATE V

(fol. 9v)

Kanhara, Kanada, Kanado, Kanaro or Kanata Ragini

A female melody of masculine character, which may have come from an old time hunting melody, associated with elephant hunting.

A Sanskrit text states that the melody is represented by a king or divine personage holding a sword in one hand and in the other an elephant's tusk, taken from the elephant he has just killed. Hymns are played by bands to congratulate him or a bard stands by praising his valour.

In this Laud illustration the tusk and sword are seen but not the elephant, which usually appears in later paintings. The man in the foreground may be a bard or a follower offering congratulations.

This Ragini is a wife of Raga Dipaka, the Raga of fire. Dipaka and its Raginis should be sung or played during May and June, the hottest months of the year, in the early hours of the night.

Sometimes Kanhara is represented as a magnificent woman of great moral and physical courage, daring and bold in war, ardent and impatient in love. She holds the sword and tusk just the same.

The name Kanaro may be connected with the Sanskrit word Karenu which sometimes stands for elephant.

COLOURS:

Background: *Pale yellow with blue sky*
House white with mauve pillars.

Hunter: *Complexion pink*
Coat orange red
Trousers yellow
Sash black, white and gold. Neck sash red, white and black
Sword dark red.

Torch attendant: *Coat yellow*
Trousers orange
Turban red and white striped
Torch gold.

Other attendant: *Coat pink Sash black and white*
Trousers mauve
Turban red.

Floor: *Dark red.*

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KANHARA RAGINI

PLATE VI

(*fol.* 15*r*)

BHAIRON, BHAIRU, BHAIRAVA RAGA

A personification of Siva as Bhairava 'The Terrible', an inferior incarnation of Mahadeva or Siva, the third deity of the Hindu triad. He is represented in the placid mood of a yogi or ascetic. His consort Bhairavi attends him and besmears his body with ashes, saffron and sandal paste. In some later illustrations an attendant is seen preparing the sandalwood on a slab in the foreground. A jewelled Kangan or bracelet is fastened on Bhairavi's wrist. In other miniatures of this Raga a hideous serpent is entwined about his shoulders and his neck is adorned with a chaplet of human skulls. Here he wears flowers or beads around his neck and the serpent is replaced by a sash.

It has been suggested that Bhairon was probably related to some festival connected with the worship of Siva, formally held in the month of Asvina (September-October) but now amalgamated with the worship of Durga.

Bhairon with its Raginis should be played in September and October from early dawn to sunrise. It expresses a feeling of peace and harmony and is supposed to drive away fear.

COLOURS:

Background: *Pale yellow and blue sky.*

House: *White with dark red roof band, green canopy and roof top.*

Male: *Complexion dark mauve*
Trousers orange red and central sash orange red
Bracelets, beads and crown gold.

Female: *Bodice red*
Skirt yellow
Sash gold and white.

Casket gold
Carpet of mauve with pink decorative edge
Cushion green with mauve stripes.

Bhairon Raga

PLATE VII

(*fol.* 19*r*)

ASAVARI RAGINI

The Indian sect of snake charmers used to overpower snakes by the plaintive melodies of their tribal airs from which Asavari Ragini is probably derived. The tune was played on a type of flute bulging at the centre, which is still used by Indian snake charmers. It is called 'Vin', not to be confused with the 'Vina', a string instrument.

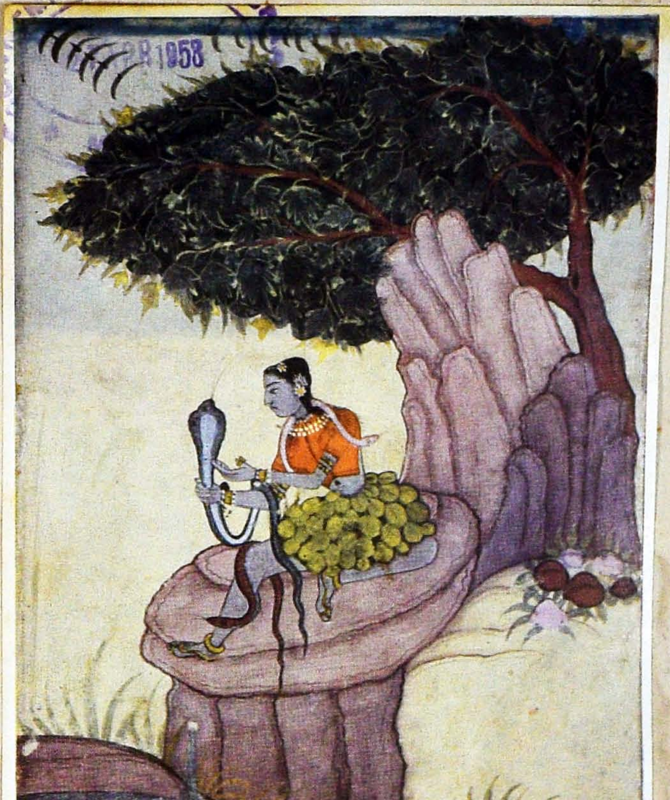
The girl, obviously an ascetic, is clad in the primitive apparel of the tribe, consisting of a set of peacock plumes and a salmon coloured bodice. The plumes do not reach her knees. In later illustrations they develop into a sari, decorated with plumes and sometimes the plumes form a seat.

Serpents were specially numerous in the sandalwood forests of the ancient Malaya hill. Hence we find the girl seated on a hillock under a huge sandal tree whose delicate, massive and perfumed foliage is shading her from the rays of the morning sun. She is playing her snake charmer's pipe—not shown in this early illustration—drawing snakes and, in some miniatures also peacocks, towards her by her melody.

This Ragini is a plaintive, melancholy song of unhappy love, pleading for redress of a grievance. The girl is awaiting her beloved who has not come. Her eyes are heavy and languorous, but she has a quiet, reserved charm. The snakes come to offer her consolation in her misery. On her brow is the sacred emblem of religion in camphor.

The rivulet running down the Malaya hill is also mentioned in some texts, one of which reads: Longing for her husband Asavari climbs the Malaya mountains, all the snakes desert their sandal trees and writhe and coil their bodies.

The hour of performance is the morning. Asavari is one of the wives or Raginis of Sri Raga, not illustrated in this collection. The literal meaning of the name Asavari is Asi, snake and ari, enemy.



Asavari Ragini

PLATE VIII

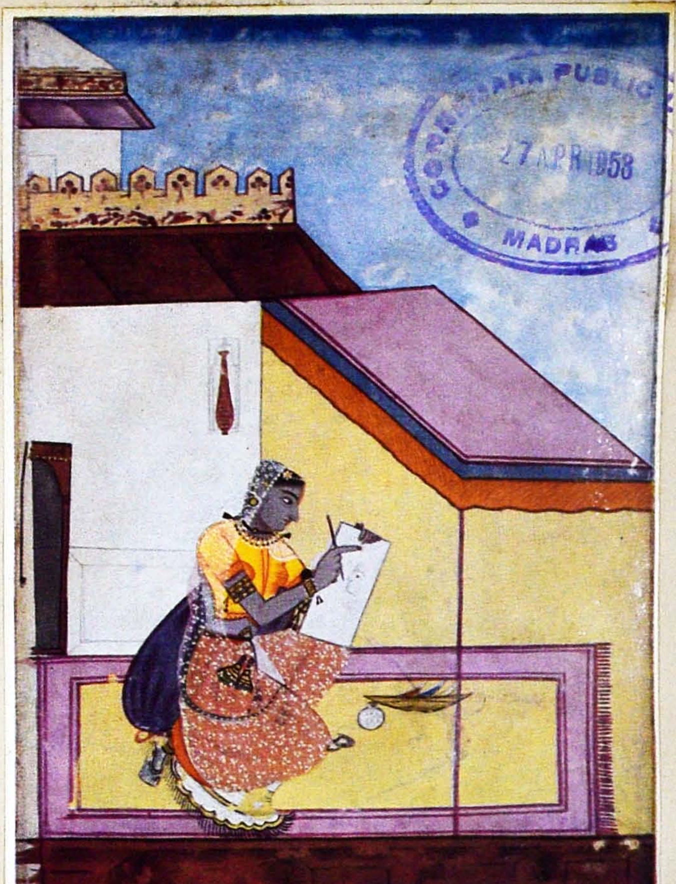
(*fol.* 20*v*)

DHANASRI, DHANNASIKA, DHANASI RAGINI

Sanskrit poetry and Hindu romantic literature give us numerous examples of a heroine separated from her lover and passing away the hours by painting his portrait. This is the way in which the melody is personified.

Some illustrations portray the separation by means of a lower panel in the miniature showing the lover riding to battle or hunting, while his lady is left alone painting, to fill in the long days of separation.

It is possible that the drawing was thought to have magical power and to speed the lover's return.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Dhanasri Ragini

PLATE IX

(*fol.* 25*r*)

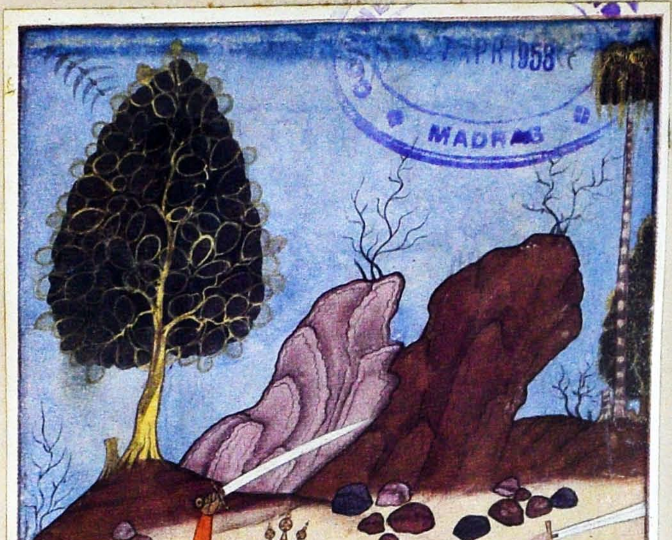
NATA, NATIKA or NAT RAGINI

This melody is a symbol of the heroic and martial spirit in man. Although a female melody it is depicted as a hero fighting in battle and decapitating his enemies.

According to the texts he rides on a horse and brandishes a sword. Some illustrations show even warring elephants.

Sometimes Nata, like Kanhara, is conceived as a courageous woman preferring a glorious career to a life of pleasure, a conquering heroine who, having overcome her enemy after a brief struggle, holds several heads in one hand and a naked sword in the other.

It is a Ragini of Dipaka Raga, the Raga of Fire, and is sung in the early hours of the night.



Nata Ragini

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PLATE X

(*fol.* 29*r*)

HINDOLA, HINDOLAKA or HINDORA RAGA

Hindola, which literally means 'Swing', is an ancient seasonal festival, dating to pre-historic times. It was later affiliated with the Jhulana festival of the Radha-Krishna cult, a popular religious festival of the North-West.[1] *The festival is celebrated during the rainy season in the month of Sravana (July–August). Of the two Ragas specially connected with it Hindola is the earlier and Vasanta derives from it.*

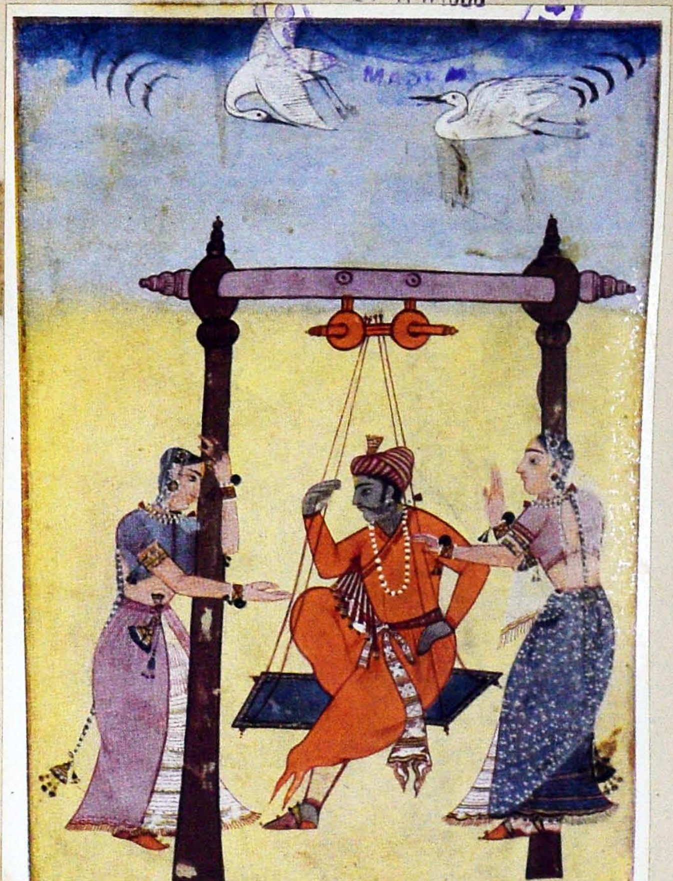
A Hindi text tells us that 'the hero leaned over while he was swinging and toppled to the ground, pretending for fun that he felt giddy. Two of his female companions ran to the rescue and he rose with a smile encouraged by the affection of his beloved.'

He is wily and clever, courting many women without being true to anyone.

Later illustrations show Krishna with Radha. (In the Bodleian illustration he appears without her.) He is seated on the swing, usually playing a musical instrument and surrounded by his gopis (village girls, the friends of his youth) who swing him to the accompaniment of the music. Krishna's pranks as a child, his follies as a boy and his amours as a youth were the cause of boundless wonder and delight. He is said to have taken 16,108 *shapes for his* 16,108 *gopis and each maid sang a different Raga in a different rhythm.*

Birds appear to be a peculiar feature of this miniature.

[1] For a description see Rajasekhara in Karpura Manjari, trsl. in the Harvard Oriental Series IV.



Hindola Raga

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PLATE XI

(*fol.* 31*r*)

Malkaus, Malava-Kausika or Malava Raga

This is a very old melody, probably associated with the region of Malwa (Malava). In early times this was referred to as Malava Raga and Malava-kausika, vulgarized in Malkausa. Kausika may perhaps refer to the goddess Kausika, daughter of Parvati. The Malavas were ancient martial tribes, who were formerly living in the Punjab but after offering resistance to Alexander the Great settled in the North-west of Central India to which they gave the name Malwa. This Raga was also known as the King of Melodies (Raga Raja).

According to the 'Sahitya Sangita Nirupana' (*p.* 51, *ed. Kannoo Mull*) *the melody arose from the throat of Hari.*

Two lovers in intimate embrace provide the motive, the feeling expressed is the enjoyment of love. Sometimes the hero of Malkaus is called 'one who has equal love for many women.' Generally he is portrayed as a strong knight with a naked sword in one hand and a human head in the other; around his neck he wears a large string of pearls, which are sometimes replaced by the heads of those he has slain in battle. Often however his sword softens into a flower stick and musicians are shown playing vinas and drums.

The Bodleian illustration depicts only the two lovers in embrace, the hero with his string of pearls and what appears to be the top of a flower stick in his hand.

Malkaus should be sung well past midnight in January or February.

MALKAUS RAGA

PLATE XII

(*fol.* 33v)

Syama Gujari Ragini

This melody appears to be a variety of Gujari and the pictorial pattern is very similar to Daksina-Gujari Ragini. Probably a Ragini of Megha Raga.

Songs of lamentation are sung by the lady, because her absent lover is unfaithful to her; she flourishes a spray of flowers and sometimes addresses her appeal to a sympathetic peacock sometimes mentioned in the texts and shown in later illustrations. An old Sanskrit Manuscript, Sangit-mala, says 'her waist is slender, her hair fine and her voice imitates the warble of a cuckoo. She is fond of an abundance of drapery and is seated on a couch well arranged with sweet smelling flowers, singing in an angry mood'.

In our miniature the lady is holding a Vina in addition to the flowers and the picture is embellished by a pale green cypress tree.

It is a morning melody of the rainy season.

Syama Gujari Ragini

PLATE XIII

(*fol.* 36*v*)

Pancham Raga

This melody which is meant to excite passion was represented in three different forms. Our illustration pictures it as two lovers in embrace with a musician or chorus of musicians attending. The second form shows a dancing lady invoking the fire of passion in her lover, while the third portrays two lovers strolling in a garden listening to musicians and watching dancers.

Pancham is one of the oldest Ragas known by name and is said by some to be the sixth principal Raga. Later it became less popular and was replaced by Raga Malkaus. It should be performed in the summer or autumn at the close of the night. The melody is rich and delicately feminine.

COLOURS:

Background: Yellow and blue sky.

House: White, green roof and red band.

Hero: Coat orange. Crown gold. Sash red and white
Coat has characteristic hangings in red.

Heroine: Bodice pink mauve. Skirt purple mauve.

Female attendant: 'Bodice dark mauve. Skirt pink mauve.

Musician: Vina orange red stem: dark red gourds studded with white
Red turban. Coat pink mauve.

PANCHAM RAGA

PLATE XIV

(*fol.* 40*v*)

BAVARI or VARARI, DESAVARALI RAGINI

Usually this melody is visualized as a girl separated from her lover. She goes out to meet him longing to be reunited.

The illustration represents her in a sad mood. The hands joined over her head (Karkata Hasta) indicate her passionate desire.

This is the second Ragini of Bhairon. The melody should be sung at the end of the day.

COLOURS:

Background: Yellow and blue sky. House white walls, dark red roof band and floor, green roof top.

Lady: Bodice orange. Skirt pink mauve
Complexion pink. Sash gold white and black.

Divan: Yellow top, pink and red base.

Incense burner: gold. Pillow purple.

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Bavari Ragini

PLATE XV

(fol. 45v)

BHAIRAVI RAGINI

A morning melody personified by Parvati worshipping Siva at a shrine on mount Kailasa in the Himalayas. The adoration of Siva is called Siva-puja and consists of such tasks as ringing bells to wake the master, offering food and flowers and waving a lamp before him.

The character of the melody is expressed through Parvati's longing for Siva. She is 'one whose lord is absent in a distant country'. But she is calm, feeling confident of his return, as he is devoted to her alone.

The bull (Nandi) seen in the right hand corner of the miniature is the vahana or vehicle of Siva, a significant feature of all Siva shrines. The scene is in the Himalaya, the source of the river Ganges which is shown at the bottom of the picture in front of Nandi. The river is believed to flow from the bull's mouth.

In her hand the lady holds brass chanas, hollow basin-like instruments like very small cymbals, which are beaten together in pairs. She is reciting a poem of devotion at the altar of the Siva lingam, a phallic symbol. Her hair is down to her waist and a garland of flowers graces her neck.

The spirit of the Ragini suggests the peaceful and contemplative harmony of faithful devotion.

COLOURS:

Background: *Pale yellow. Cypress tree pale green*
Shrine white with gold pinnacles and red band
Floor purple. River slate grey
Shiva puja lingam pink. Candlestick or incense burner gold
Bowl green.

Lady: *Bodice orange. Sari silver. Skirt yellow*
Sash white and gold. Castanets or ghanas gold.

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Bhairavi Ragini

PLATE XVI

(fol. 49v)

DEVAKALI RAGINI

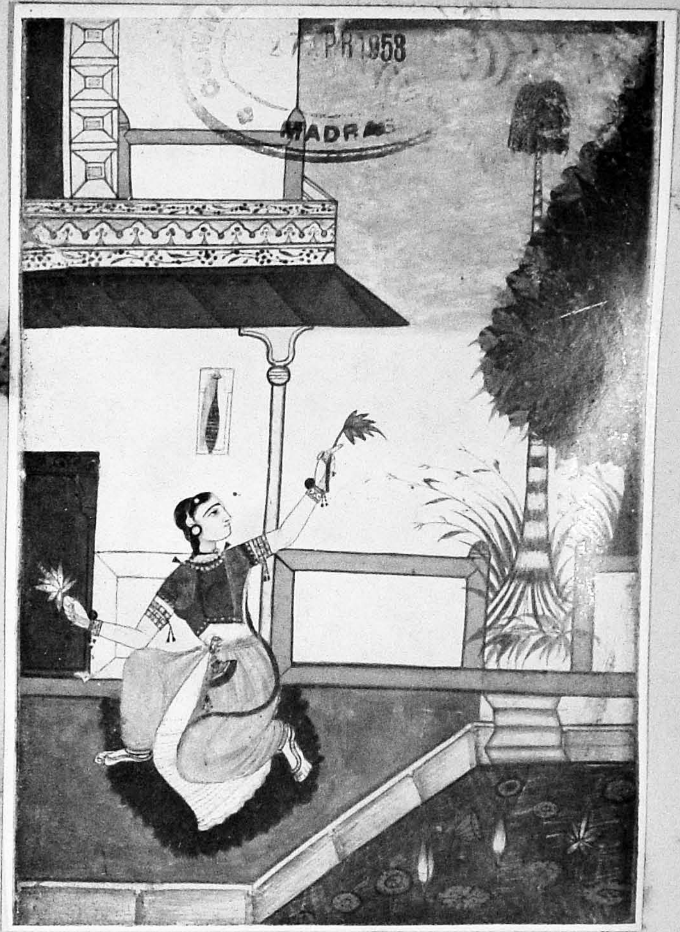
According to the Persian inscription on the top of the miniature this Ragini is called Devakali, but little is known about it. The name may stand for Devakari-Devakri, an old Kriyana Raga derived from a melody.

The text cited in Pundarik's Ragamala says: 'Devakri is a daughter of the gods, very artful and gracing the closing hours of the day.' She is seated by a lotus pond with a lotus in one hand and a leaf in the other.

COLOURS:

Background: *Yellow and blue sky*
Tree dark green with lighter green leaves
House white with dark red canopy. Floor purple
Lotus pond grey with gold red and white lotus.

Lady: *Complexion pink*
Bodice dark mauve
Skirt orange, Sash red and white
She appears to be sitting on green leaves
Flower in one hand red and green leaf in the other
Necklace of gold.



DEVAKALI RAGINI

PLATE XVII

(*fol.* 62*r*)

BILAWAL, VILAWAL, VILAVALI RAGINI

The character of this melody is expressed through the picture of a lady who is going to meet her lover. The miniature shows her putting on her jewels on the terrace in front of her house repeatedly recalling and invoking her favourite deity, the God of Love, while she completes the sixteen items of her toilette. Her complexion is like the colour of a blue lotus and she is well bedecked with all kinds of beautiful ornaments. The girl attendant who is assisting her holds a tray with golden jars containing the toilette requisites.

Bilawal is one of the wives of Hindola Raga. The melody should be sung in the morning.

Bilawal Ragini

PLATE XVIII

(fol. 66v)

Vasanta, Vasantika (Vasanti) Ragini

Vasanta Ragini is probably one of the earliest seasonal melodies connected with the Spring carnival. In India the advent of Spring is associated with new mango blossoms which are often used as its symbols. Hence we find here the dancer carrying a spray of mango blossom in a flower pot, brought by two ladies, one of whom plays the drum while the other uses castanets or cymbals.

The ancient Indian Spring festival was invariably connected with a dancing carnival. Later on the Krishna cult crept into this festival. That is the reason why we find the melody, which is a feminine one, visualized as a dancing Krishna. This anomaly of a feminine melody symbolized by a male figure is sometimes adjusted by the introduction of Radha embracing her lover Krishna.

The dancing rhythm of the melody suggests the joyful emotions of human beings at the advent of Spring, the time for mirth, festivity and gay love.

Vasanta is a Ragini of Sri Raga.

COLOURS:

Background: *Yellow and blue sky*
Tree red green with light green leaves.

Male: *Coat orange, mauve frill. Gold crown*
White sash round neck
Sash red and gold
Trousers mauve
Complexion dark mauve.

Lady with drum: *Bodice purple*
Sari silver
Skirt pink
Sash red and white
Complexion pink
Drum red brown

Lady under tree: *Bodice orange*
Dress purple
Sari silver
Sash red and white
Castanets or cymbals gold
Complexion pink.

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VASANTA RAGINI

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DATE AND PROVENANCE
of the Laud Ragamala Miniatures

by

KARL KHANDALAVALA

The Laud Ragamala miniatures have been the subject of considerable differences of opinion amongst art critics with regard to their provenance and date. Binyon and Arnold in *The Court Painters of the Grand Moguls, 1921, p. 35* referred to this series as being *Hindu in style, not Moghul.* Thereafter, Stchoukine in *La Peinture Indienne, 1929*, evidently feeling some difficulty in accepting the miniatures as Rajasthani, cautiously described them as *Ecole régionale indienne* and ascribed them to the beginning of the 17th century. A little later, Mr. N. C. Mehta, who had already noticed the pictures in the *Bodleian Quarterly Record, VII, no.* 76, wrote that they must have been painted at least prior to 1587. (*Journ. Indian Society Oriental Art III*, 2 *p. 145*). He made no suggestions as to their provenance but recently informed the writer that in his opinion it is Deccani. The same conclusion had earlier been reached by Dr. Motichandra in his article on *Deccani Painting* in the Hindi Art Journal, *Kala Nidhi, I, no.* 1 and by Rai Krishna Das, the distinguished curator of Bharat Kala Bhawan, Benares. Dr. Goetz, on the other hand, in the *Baroda State Museum Bulletin, IV, p. 38* ascribed the Laud Ragamala to what he calls *the early Kachhwaha school of Raja Bhagwandas of Amber* (1575-1592) and dated it 1570-1580. *It stands,* he says, *so near not only to the architecture of the Purana Mahal but also to early Rajput sculptures and to the female figures of the Razm-*

nama that we must classify it as early Amber. Its composition stands not far from the Bundela primitives, but the technique is already much more refined and detailed. This ascription seems difficult to accept since we have no knowledge of any Rajasthani School of that period—let alone of any Kachhwaha School. It re-appears however in *The Art of India and Pakistan, 1950, pp. 96 and 110.* Here Basil Gray, while differing from Dr. Goetz's early dating, considers that the colour scheme is nearer the Jahangir palette than that of Akbar and that the architecture, cypress trees, and conventional birds in flight indicate an early seventeenth century date. He ends by classifying the set as *Rajasthani, 1600-1610.*

In the face of these opinions, the date and provenance of this famous series is obviously highly controversial. I believe, however, that a careful examination of the details can lead to only one conclusion—that the set is, in fact, of Deccani origin—and I propose to set out as clearly as I can the various arguments which have convinced Dr. Motichandra and myself that this is the case.

Before considering the points in favour of a Deccani theory, it will be convenient to dispose of whatever idioms are common to both the Rajasthani and the Deccani styles and therefore immaterial to the discussion.

The furniture and architecture, for example, which occur so commonly as background to the pictures are at least as much Deccani as Rajasthani and were in fact common to many parts of India in the seventeenth century. The double cypress trees are common to both schools and the same can be said of the pointed coats (*chakdar jama*), the pearl necklaces spreading to the shoulders, the ear-rings extending round the ear and long plaits of hair intertwined with white silk skeins. The latter appear not only in Rajasthani painting but in the early Mughal series, the *Jaipur Razm Nama* and the Deccani MS., the *Tarif-i-Hussain Shahi.*

A consideration of these points does not therefore help

us and it is only when we scrutinize other details that a positive decision can be reached.

The stylistic features which have induced us to regard the Laud Ragamala as Deccani may be briefly summarized as follows.

Several of the female facial types appear to be derived from those of the earlier *Tarif-i-Hussain Shahi* in the collection of the *Bharat Itihasa Sansodhoka Mandal*, Poona. This manuscript is unquestionably Deccani and datable to about 1590. (Compare Fig. 1. with Fig. 1a. and Fig. 2. with Fig. 2a.)

1
Laud Ragamala, Bilawal Ragini

1 *a*
Tarif-i-Hussain Shahi

2
Laud Ragamala, Pancham Raga

2 *a*
Tarif-i-Hussain Shahi

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3
Nujum-al-Ulum. Detail

4
Khawar Namah. Detail

Another type of female face, namely the long ovoid with narrow neck, seen best in Pancham Raga, Pl. XIII (seated woman) and in Bavari Ragini, Pl. XIV, has no counterpart in Mughal or Rajasthani painting prior to 1640. It can, however, be traced to the influence of Deccani miniatures such as the yogini of the Berlin Museum or of the Chester Beatty collection—the last named being in turn derived from a mixture of Safavid and Turkish influences very prevalent at the Bijapur court and possibly of the school of *Wali Jan*. Another example is the *Nujum-al-Ulum* manuscript (Fig. 3.) which is dated 1570 and unquestionably Deccani in origin. Moreover, a large face set on a narrow neck, which is a common Deccani feature, is seen repeatedly in the Laud Ragamala even where the face is not of the long ovoid type, for example in Devakali Ragini. Pl. XVI.

The faces of some of the men, e.g. the king in Pancham Raga, Pl. XIII, are also of the same ovoid type, while those of the men in the Laud Ragamala who wear moustaches, affect what is known as the *pharretedar* moustache. This is a moustache which fans out into a series of fine strands of hair. It is typically Deccani and is seen in the *Tarif-i-Hussain Shahi* and also in the *Khawar Namah* (Fig. 4) of the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, which though dated 1645 is a most characteristic Deccani manuscript of the first half of the 17th century.

In most cases the transparent *odhni*, wimple, worn by the women falls only over the extreme rear portion of the head. This also is a Deccani characteristic. The *sari* in the *Tarif-i-Hussain Shahi* figures also covers only the extreme rear of the head.

The long *patkas* or sashes attached to the front of the skirt, which are narrow at the waist and broad at the base with a fringe, fall with an abandon peculiar to Deccani painting. A striking similarity is seen between the *patka* worn by the standing female in Bilawal Ragini, Pl. XVII,

and that worn by the girl holding a musical instrument in Hindola Raga of the Bikaner collection[1] which is a Deccani miniature of the period about 1590.

In several miniatures of the series the transparent *odhni* is covered with white spots as though bespangled with pearls. Such *odhnis* are not seen in Rajasthani painting till well after 1640, in Mughal painting they do not occur at all. They do, however, appear in the India Office *Khawar Namah* of 1649.

The *choli* (bodice) comes almost to the waist and at its base is invariably shaped like a wide inverted 'V'. This characteristic is constantly seen in the Deccani MS. of the *Nujum-al-Ulum* (cp. the bodice of the attendant at the right in Fig. 3). Such *cholis* are sometimes seen in the *Razm Namah* but not in Rajasthani painting.

The turbans worn by the men are conical at the rear though not of the typical Bijapur type. (cp. Hindola Raga, Pl. X.). They never appear outside the Deccan.

The tree in Ragini Asavari, Pl. VII, is entirely different from the stylized trees of early Rajasthani painting and does not even correspond to the usual Mughal treatment of trees. All along the fringes of the tree are leaves of a lighter shade (cp. Raga Hindola of the Bikaner collection. ibid. Pl. 142). This is a Deccani characteristic which persists even in a late Deccani example such as the girls on a swing in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.[2]

In Ragini Asavari, Pl. VII, the rocks below the stone on which the girl is seated consist of straight, flat slabs. This treatment of rocks is not found in Mughal or early Rajasthani art but appears in several later Deccani paintings.[3]

The loose hair of the girl in Ragini Asavari, Pl. VII.

[1] *Art of India & Pakistan* 1950, Pl. 142.

[2] Kramrisch, *A Survey of Painting in the Deccan*, 1930, Pl. 24.

[3] A Ragini series and a late seventeenth cent. MS. called G'ulshan-i-Ishq, both in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.

ends in a series of stiff, wiry, sharp strands of hair. Compare the loose hair of the central figure in the Dhanasri Ragini of the Bikaner collection.[1]

The infantryman in Nata Ragini, Pl. IX, has a belt round his waist with bells attached. In the *Khawar Namah* some retainers are wearing similar belts.

The bottles in the wall niches (Bavari Ragini, Pl. XIV) have long, narrow, elliptical bodies and short, narrow necks. The same type of bottle is held by an attendant in one of the *Tarif-i-Hussain Shahi* miniatures. In Rajasthani and Mughal painting the bottles are shorter and broader and the neck is much longer.

5
Mahomed Adil Shah

In several of the Laud Ragamala miniatures a wooden panelling known as *dilha* is seen at the very base of the picture (Malkaus Raga, Pl. XI). This compositional device is peculiar to Deccani painting prior to 1640. It appears

[1] Goetz, *Art and Architecture of Bikaner*, 1950, Pl. 2.

in the Bharat Kala Bhavan's *Dipak Raga* [1] and is used even in the portrait study of Mahomed Adil Shah (Fig. 5).

Monochrome backgrounds were more popular in Deccani than in Rajasthani art. They are adopted throughout the *Khawar Namah* where some of the backgrounds are yellow, just as in the Laud Ragamala.

The horse in Nata Ragini, Pl. IX, with its long neck, small narrow head, and heavy forward action, is similar to the horses in the *Tarif-i-Hussain Shahi* and in *Vijayanagar* sculpture.

The excessive girth of the thigh and leg of the male dancer in Malhar Raga, Pl. I, is a marked characteristic in Deccani portraits of the first quarter of the seventeenth century.[2]

The frequent use of mauve is significant. It is a colour little used in Rajasthani miniatures prior to 1640 and though more often seen in Mughal painting was mostly employed by Deccani painters who appear to have been very partial to it. The general colour scheme of the set and the manner in which brown is introduced points forcibly to a Deccani origin.

The *patkas* worn by the men have a prominent cross design (Bhivas Ragini, Pl. IV), a favourite pattern with weavers in the Deccan. It occurs in several Deccani paintings of the first half of the seventeenth century.

A few long, thin, wavy, strands of hair called *kakapaksha* fall on the cheeks of the women. They appear in the *Tarif-i-Hussain Shahi*, *Nujum-al-Ulum*, and *Khawar Namah*, though not in the miniature reproduced as Fig. 3.

In seated figures the *patkas* are usually emerging from under the legs. This is common in Deccani painting though not unknown in Mughal painting.

The fluttering, curled, pointed ends of the *patkas* and

[1] *Art of India and Pakistan*, 1950, Pl. 146, Fig. 807.

[2] See portraits of Ibrahim Adil Shah II in Dr. Motichandra's article in Marg. V, No. 1.

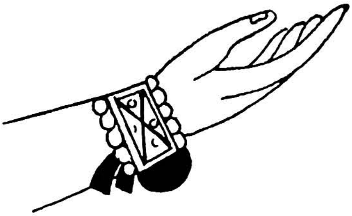
doppattas worn by the men (Malkaus Raga, Pl. XI and Vasanta Ragini, Pl. XVIII) are very common in early seventeenth century Deccani painting. They occur also in sixteenth century Mughal painting but not in early Rajasthani painting.

Although the women in the *Khawar Namah* (Fig. 3) are Abyssinians with thick lips, they should be compared with the female dancer in Malhar Raga Pl. I and with the girl in Malkaus Raga, Pl. XI. The type is unknown in Mughal or Rajasthani painting.

There is a 'swing and sweep' of *doppattas* and *patkas* in Deccani painting of the first half of the seventeenth century that is unmistakable and widely different from the handling of these garments in Rajasthani art. Even in Mughal painting this 'swing and sweep', seen in almost every miniature of the Laud Ragamala, is never as pronounced as it is in Deccani miniatures.

In the *Nujum-al-Ulum*, the *Tarif-i-Hussain Shahi* and the *Khawar Namah* there is a marked angularity in the treatment of arms. This is also a pronounced characteristic of the Laud Ragamala.

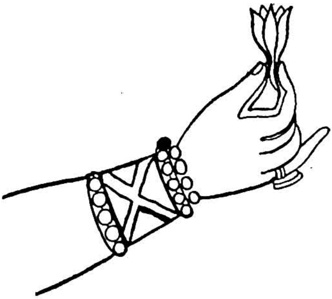
The bracelets worn by some of the women are engraved with the cross design seen in Fig. 6 (Hindola Raga, Pl. X). This cross design does not appear in early Rajasthani art or in Mughal painting prior to 1640. It seems to have been



6

Laud Ragamala, Hindola Raga

popular however in the Deccan. Compare the large *Chand Bibi* painting on cloth of the mid seventeenth century in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay (Fig. 6a).



6 *a*
Chand Bibi

The *padasaras*, foot rings, worn by the women, have a pronounced bend in the middle and form a loop near the toes. They are neither Rajasthani nor Mughal in type but show South Indian influence of the Vijayanagar period.

The method of depicting the excessively fine texture of the transparent *odhnis*, wimples, by a series of parallel thin lines of white colour drawn very close to each other is also seen in Hindola Raga of the Bikaner collection. This technique is not employed in early Rajasthani paintings where the *odhni* is merely outlined or a light white wash of colour is applied.

The hands in almost every case are disproportionally large. This characteristic is also seen in a Deccani Ragini from about 1590 (*The Art of India & Pakistan* Pl. 143) and again in Kamod Ragini and Dhanasri Ragini of the Bikaner collection (Goetz, *Art and Architecture of Bikaner*, Pls. 2 and 4).

Finally it is important to remember, that the lower limit of the set is 1640 and that it is difficult to reconcile the types, costumes and colouring with any of the known examples of the Rajasthani school painted prior to 1640.

In view of all the parallels there can surely be little doubt that the Laud Ragamala was painted in the Deccan and while the exact place of its origin still remains problematical, it must be attributed to an artist conversant with both the Mughal and Deccani styles.

It can hardly have been done prior to 1620. Not only is the Mughal influence very considerable but any earlier date would presuppose a greater likeness to the Deccani school of Ibrahim Adil Shah II. This Deccani school increasingly absorbed Mughal influences from 1620 onwards and we shall therefore probably not be far wrong if we attribute the Laud Ragamala approximately to the year 1625.

In view of the fact that the Khawar Namah of the Prince of Wales Museum is dated 1645 it is not possible entirely to rule out a slightly later date such as 1630 or 1635. At the same time such features as the pointed jama and the long V-shaped bodice do not appear in Deccani painting much later than 1620 and therefore 1625 seems the most likely date.

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(*see also p.* 54)

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